Building Human Capacity through Training

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Abstract

This article reviews the evolution of approaches used by U.S. government-supported training programs as a way of building human capacity in the developing world. Over the years, training approaches have evolved to accommodate changes in both our understanding of development as well as changes in geo-political concerns about revolution in Central America and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Technological advances, increased understanding of effective adult learning methods, and administrative requirements within the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) have also influenced the way training is currently implemented. As an active partner of USAID for more than 20 years, World Learning has made significant contributions to the field's understanding of training design and implementation, and to their outcomes.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, American foreign policymakers were well aware that there was no guarantee that the newly independent states and former Warsaw Pact countries would adopt policies to support vibrant democracies or free-market economic systems. It was quite possible that some of these transitioning nations might adopt right-wing, authoritarian, or militaristic forms of government or even retain or re-impose remnants of a socialist command economy. U.S. government officials understood that these nations would determine their course of transition within the first few years, when old political, social, and economic systems were still in shambles and successors not yet firmly established. Among the U.S. responses to averting potential crises, as codified in the Support for East European Democracies (SEED) and Freedom Support Act (FSA) legislation, was a commitment to train current and future leaders of transitioning nations. Administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), training programs were designed to support efforts in economic restructuring, democracy building, and enhancing citizens' quality of life.

As a result, training efforts, in concert with other interventions such as government funded technical assistance programs, private sector investment, and the introduction of new communications and manufacturing technologies, have contributed to positive change in the region. For instance, training programs introduced entrepreneurs to new approaches to business, resulting in increases in productivity, profitability, and employment. In addition, contacts developed between the United States and Eastern European partners, as a result of training programs, have resulted in increased trade. Moreover, training, technical assistance, and capacity-building projects fostered the strong indigenous non-governmental organizations (NGOs), helping many to become authentic voices of the people. The training of government officials contributed to streamlined government regulations at local and national levels, and greater transparency and an increased willingness on the part of officials to listen to the opinions of constituents. On the individual and institutional levels, formal studies and anecdotal success stories provide compelling evidence that U.S. government-funded training programs have helped to foster positive change.[1] For those cognizant of the role training plays in USAID's development toolkit, its effectiveness comes as no surprise.

The Early Days of USAID Training

For decades, the U.S. government has financed international development programs that offer both long- and short-term training for potential leaders in a wide range of professional and technical fields. There was never a single government agency responsible for all international training; however, USAID shouldered primary responsibility for training in developing nations.[2] Some training programs were linked to specific development projects in technical areas such as health or agriculture. Other programs focused on increasing the number of university-trained people in the beneficiary country and awarded degrees to participants.

Based on the belief that sustainable development depends ultimately on people, USAID hoped to train future generations of leaders through scholarship programs in areas such as business, government, science, and the humanities. Some programs funded scholarships to train competent leaders at all levels of society, intending to help the beneficiary country reach a point where its economic, social, and political systems could, as development theory in the 1960s hypothesized, "take off" and be sustained.

From its creation in 1961, USAID administered what it called "participant training" programs in developing countries. It seemed clear from the very beginning that participant training was an effective way to promote new knowledge, skills, and attitudes to potential leaders in the developing world that would enable them to carry on their business in a more effective manner than before. For example, Botswana's economic, political, and social development reaped significant benefits from USAID-funded training. Whereas Botswana was once ranked as one of the least developed countries in Africa in the early 1970s with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of $130, today, after over nearly two decades of USAID-funded training, its GDP is almost 20 times that figure. Steady economic growth of

nearly seven percent annually has been achieved and, in a region where government stability was uncommon, Botswana has benefited from a stable, democratically elected government. While multiple factors contributed to its success — including mineral wealth and large-scale private investment that built infrastructure and created the means for exploiting that resource — U.S.-supported training was clearly one of them. Since 1982, USAID has supported U.S.-based academic training in Botswana for more than 800 mid- and senior-level government employees, business managers, and educators, as well as training for an additional 4,000 people (*American Foreign Assistance* 1999, pp.3-5). The Botswana experience suggests that for such training to be effective, a minimum threshold of professionals must be involved to create a critical mass of leaders and managers who share an understanding of both the challenges their country faces and potential new approaches for responding to those challenges.

USAID-sponsored training has evolved from its original focus in order to keep pace with changes in global politics and economics, development issues, approaches to adult learning, technology, and organizational structures within USAID itself. Yet, training remains an important and effective tool of foreign assistance, although the outcomes now sought by training have changed. In the 1970s, USAID-sponsored training was valued for its ability to bring less developed countries to a point where poverty could be seriously addressed. In the 1980s, training was seen as an important element in the fight against communist expansion. Today, training is perceived as a critical tool in helping countries transition from totalitarianism and socialism to democracy and market capitalism. As the nature of training changed, programs were modified from country specific training linked to particular sectoral needs (such as agriculture) to global training contracts that provide a range of interventions throughout the world.

Participant Training Evolves

From the first training programs under the Marshall Plan at the end of World War II through the early 1980s, U.S. government-sponsored training was usually organized in one of two ways: One approach, still used today, incorporated training into sectoral programs. For instance, an agri-business development project might include a U.S.-based training component as part of its efforts to strengthen the food processing industry, in addition to grants, loans, and technical assistance to food processing firms. This approach has the benefit of tying training closely to other program elements to introduce new knowledge, skills, and attitudes in ways that reinforce one another. A significant drawback, however, is that this approach is not flexible enough to respond to changing needs and circumstances, or to take advantage of training opportunities that might arise on the spur of the moment in other sectors.

A second approach implements a general training program for a particular country, rather than a particular sector in that country. This approach allows training to be developed and implemented in response to needs that may not necessarily fit within a sector-specific

technical assistance project. Many USAID missions understand the benefits of being able to send a small number of key people to the United States or other countries for training on an *ad hoc* basis. A significant drawback to this approach is the expense of managing a contract with a training provider for this type of on–off, *ad hoc* training that may not link directly to an existing program. Without an appropriate contracting mechanism, USAID missions were limited in their ability to implement this type of training.

The PIET Contract

In response to the needs of USAID missions for an easy mechanism that would allow both types of training, USAID awarded contracts in the 1970s to organizations that provided academic placement, technical placement, and monitoring services on a global basis. In 1981, global contractors for this work were handling placement services for an estimated 3,500 of a total 7,844 persons in training that year. A report by the Office of the Inspector General that same year recommended that USAID's Office of International Training (OIT) consolidate several major global contracts under one umbrella contract for administrative efficiency and price reduction. USAID/OIT acted on that recommendation and, in 1982, requested bids on a contract for a global training administrator. The contract was awarded to a consortium of four not-for-profit exchange and educational organizations, known collectively as Partners for International Education and Training (PIET). The lead agency and administrative partner of PIET was the African-American Institute; other members were The Experiment in International Living (EIL, now World Learning), The Asia Foundation, and America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc. Three of these four partners espoused corporate missions with a clearly defined regional focus. EIL was the sole partner with a global mandate and a global scope of operations.

PIET quickly became the workhorse of USAID's participant training programming. The training contract was competitively bid four times and PIET was successful on all four occasions. In its first nine years, PIET placed more than 22,000 participants from more than 100 countries who came to the United States for training. During its final six years, from 1991 until the contract ended in 1996, PIET placed an additional 20,000 students.

The PIET training program permitted a variety of training modalities such as academic training, short-term technical training, and study tours. Academic training involved students enrolled in undergraduate, masters, and doctoral programs, generally in management or scientific areas. Short-term programs were of various lengths and characteristics. In general, they were less than three months long and were mostly designed for individuals or small groups. Typically, they included a two- to three-week tailored course at a university or training institution, combined with visits to relevant nearby businesses or government offices to observe in operation what they learned in the classroom. Some short-term programs included observational study tours during which participants visited several cities, talked with experts, and gained different perspectives on the topic under discussion. Occasionally, groups as large as 40 or more people participated together in a training program.

During the first nine years of the PIET contract, about 84 percent of the 22,000 participants received short-term technical training, and 16 percent enrolled in long-term academic training. Forty-eight percent of the participants were from Central and South America, 21 percent from Africa, 20 percent from the Middle and Near East, and the remaining 11 percent from the Asia/Pacific region.

PIET provided an array of administrative and processing services, including language testing, compiling application dossiers, managing application processes, helping students receiving academic training to select a university and program to attend, monitoring student progress, and dealing with the myriad financial aspects of their programs. In its early years, PIET handled about 15 percent of the total number of USAID-sponsored trainees.[3] In its latter years, PIET administered an average of 25 to 33 percent of the total number of USAID-sponsored students. The balance of participant trainees in the United States was selected and processed by USAID mission personnel and managed in the United States by other U.S. non-profit and for-profit contractors. In addition — as the numbers cited above in the Botswana case highlight — a significant portion of the overall number of participants in training programs participated only in short-term training programs held in their own country.

Professional trainers know that successful training includes some application or follow-up component, an opportunity for trainees to put into practice what they have learned. PIET contracts permitted limited opportunity to help participants implement in their home country the knowledge and skills developed in the United States, or to help students re-integrate into their own societies after several years away from home. Typical USAID/Mission-administered training projects have contract staff both in-country and in the United States and provide significant additional technical assistance and support as permitted in their contracts. However, because PIET project staff was mostly located in the United States, PIET and USAID tended to rely primarily on Foreign Service national staff to provide follow-up support.

Responding to Challenges in the Americas

In its early years, the PIET contract paid limited attention to political or foreign policy dimensions of training programs, or to the desire to better integrate foreign students into American life to help them develop an understanding and appreciation of American culture and values. This changed as USAID developed new approaches in its development portfolio to meet the perceived political threat of communism spreading in Central and South America. As a result, in 1984, a commission headed by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger recommended new efforts in Central and South America to confront concerns over Soviet propaganda efforts and armed insurgencies in those countries. Among other things, the Kissinger Commission called for developing specialized programs to combat what it characterized as Soviet propaganda in Central America. Its plan called for the creation of training programs targeted at less well-off citizens in the region. In 1985, USAID responded

by creating the Caribbean and Latin American Scholarship Program (CLASP). By 1987, CLASP was expanded to include the Andean countries. Within the CLASP umbrella were a number of specialized programs that responded to particular needs. These included the Central American Peace Scholarship Program, the Presidential Training Initiative for the Island Caribbean, the Andean Peace Scholarship Program, the Central American Scholarship Program administered by Georgetown University, and the Cooperative Association of States for Scholarship. CLASP programs continued through 1998, administered by various U.S.-based contractors, including PIET, other NGOs, for-profit consulting firms, and universities.

Many CLASP projects established offices in both the beneficiary countries and in the United States. CLASP was designed to offer various types of training to socio-economically disadvantaged populations (70 percent of all trainees) and women (40 percent). Instead of academic training, most trainees came to the United States for short-term training, tailored study tours, and internships. As most trainees had not traveled previously, detailed orientation sessions and English language training were provided. A major new component was "Experience America," in which trainees were exposed to Americans through short homestays and participation in cultural activities. Finally, CLASP programs recognized the importance of staying in touch with former trainees and programmed resources to support in-country follow-on training (*CLASP: Ninth Annual Report 1995,* preface). Nearly 22,000 people from 14 countries benefited directly from the panoply of CLASP programs (*CLASP: Ninth Annual Report 1995,* preface).

The Pakistan Participant Training project

In 1984, the U.S. government established one of the largest single-country training programs — the Pakistan Participant Training Project (PPTP). Over its ten-year lifespan, this program provided U.S., in-country, and third-country training for more than 2,000 Pakistani participants. Given the size of the country and the program, as well as contractual reasons specific to USAID, the agency felt it would be effective to have a program dedicated to the requirements of the country, so this program was administered outside of PIET. While the majority of participants came to the United States as short-term trainees, there also were about 500 Pakistanis who enrolled in universities to receive academic degrees, and another nearly 400 who attended training in third countries.

PPTP was established to improve the performance of government operations. In addition to providing targeted training for government officials, the program also attempted to strengthen Pakistani public service training institutions in order to develop a local training capacity. By working with the National Institutes of Public Administration in larger cities like Lahore, Islamabad, and Peshawar, PPTP produced a cadre of highly-trained municipal leaders and government administrators who knew each other, were committed to improved public service and public administration, and trained and mentored others. The program also contributed to increasing the status and visibility of women in government and public affairs by involving large numbers of women in training, many of whom ultimately moved into

leadership positions in their organizations. Other beneficial results may well have been unintentional. For instance, the project administered seminars called "How to Start a Project," designed to help local government and NGO officials establish community development projects. Many of those who attended eventually applied what they learned in private efforts to start new businesses. The initial program was wildly popular and oversubscribed and, as a result, it was offered on multiple occasions at different locations in the country.

Two major factors influenced the U.S. government's decision to support this large program in Pakistan. First, Pakistan was an active supporter of U.S. policy vis-à-vis China and an important bulwark against potential Chinese expansion or influence in that part of the world. Second, the U.S. government also provided significant financial support to India, also as a means of countering Chinese influence. Given the long-standing enmity between India and Pakistan, a large aid package to Pakistan was seen, perhaps, as a way of balancing the scales.

Training in Central Europe and the Former Soviet Union

In 1992, PIET demonstrated its flexibility as a contracting mechanism when USAID began working in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in response to the dramatic changes occurring there. Policymakers viewed training as a quick and effective way to make an immediate difference; that is, training could provide new ideas and positive examples to reduce the danger of these countries slipping back toward communism. USAID responded with two programs tailored to meet the needs of trainees from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. The Participant Training Program for Europe (PTPE) and the Newly Independent States (NIS) Exchanges and Training (NET) Project were designed to bring large numbers of people to the United States for short-term training programs to develop new competencies and to learn firsthand how change could be undertaken and achieved. The PTPE program was administered through the PIET contract; and the NET program, although originally administered as part of the PTPE contract, was later contracted out separately. The scope of this endeavor was significant; the NET Project brought more than 6,000 people from the former Soviet Union to the United States within a two-year period. The PTPE Project brought more than 1,000 people from Central Europe to the United States in a comparable time frame.

From PIET to GTD

In 1996, USAID ended nearly 15 years of administering the PIET contract and created a successor contract, Global Training for Development (GTD). GTD was not simply a change in contracting arrangements; rather, it brought to USAID-funded training important lessons learned. Perhaps most importantly, it aligned training with USAID's new approach to development that focused on ensuring that all development activities contributed to the

mission's strategic objectives in that country and that all interventions had clearly articulated outcomes. To improve the likelihood of achieving results, the new GTD contract incorporated opportunities for increased in-country training and for such training to occur after completion of a major U.S.-based training. It recognized the need to provide support for trainees after their return home and it endeavored to streamline the administration of training by making it less bureaucratic and more flexible.

The interest in results led USAID to look more closely at corporate-based training where results, or "the return on training investment," constitute critical indicators by which corporations justify their investments in training. USAID training officials reached out to professional organizations such as the American Society of Training and Development (ASTD) and suggested that its contractors become familiar with the techniques and approaches in use in corporate training.

The introduction of GTD coincided with a dramatic reduction in USAID's budget. From the early 1990s to 2000, the USAID budget shrink from about $18 to $12 billion. Not surprisingly, the number of trainees also decreased dramatically. In dollar terms, USAID estimates that it devoted $485 million for all training in 1990, including U.S.-based, in-country, and third-country training. This figure rose to $649 million in 1995, reflecting large numbers of trainees from Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. By 1999, the figure dropped to $398 million.[4] Similarly, the number of USAID trainees, which had fluctuated in the intervening two decades from 6,000 in 1978 to a high of 17,693 in 1995, dropped precipitously to 6,595 in 1997. At the same time, there has been an increase in interest in tracking the numbers of people being trained in their home countries or in third countries, and USAID and its contractors are increasingly involved in identifying and building the capacity of local institutions to provide training on an on-going basis.

USAID and its contractors have also begun to incorporate distance-learning technologies into their training activities. Some trainees now engage in online discussions and chats with mentors in the United States as part of their follow-up training. Others are able to access written resources available on CD-ROMs. Still others now use email and listservs to share lessons learned with colleagues at home and in the United States. Web-based video cameras and live conferences are still difficult to arrange due to limitations of bandwidth and access, but these new technologies are gradually becoming more widespread and common.

In sum, USAID-funded participant training has evolved in important ways over the past 53 years. It has kept current with changes in training methodologies, with the needs of international participants, and with new technologies as it balances the dual needs of both development and U.S. foreign policy objectives. Training has proven itself an effective and flexible tool for achieving many diverse objectives.

World Learning's Role

As a partner in the PIET joint venture in the early 1980s, World Learning began its long association with USAID. By that time, World Learning already had decades of experience around the world in many facets of training for adults. For example, beginning in the early 1960s World Learning had already trained thousands of young Americans preparing to become Peace Corps volunteers. And in 1978, World Learning was contracted by the U.S. Department of State to administer a large-scale language, intercultural, and job skills training program for Southeast Asian refugees in refugee camps. Furthermore, in addition to extensive experience with large-scale training programs, World Learning also brought experience as an academic institution as well as an understanding of and commitment to innovative and experientially based approaches to learning. As USAID-supported training changed over time, so also did World Learning's role evolve as an active USAID partner.

Experience with the Peace Corps, refugee training, PIET, and graduate school education all left World Learning perfectly positioned to respond when USAID introduced the CLASP family of programs. In 1991, World Learning was awarded a two-year contract to develop and implement follow-on training for approximately 2,000 Guatemalan Central American Peace Scholarship (CAPS) participants who had first received short-term technical training in the United States. CAPS was USAID's first ever in-country follow-on training project. As a result, World Learning developed nine reinforcement courses in the technical training areas initiated by the U.S.-based training — community development, bilingual and monolingual teaching, rural health, cooperatives administration, training of trainers, natural resources conservation, agriculture, and small enterprise development, along with focused English language training. All of these courses were conducted at least four times in various sites throughout Guatemala, and a total of 73 courses were delivered during the two-year period.

In addition to follow-on training programs, World Learning also created a mechanism to help trainees apply what they learned to concrete situations in their own communities in an effort to effect change. Trainees were encouraged to apply their training to create community-based projects aided by small amounts of funding support to implement these projects. As a result, close to 1,500 community-based development projects were implemented in Guatemala that grew out of follow-on training, benefiting more than 40,000 people. Both follow-on training and grants constituted important innovations.

In 1989, World Learning was awarded the Andean Peace Scholarship Program for Ecuador and, in 1991 it was awarded the follow-on Ecuador Development Scholarship Program (EDSP). This program provided academic training for master degree candidates in a variety of technical areas as well as short-term technical training and a follow-on component. In addition to administering short-term follow-on training, World Learning developed and distributed the publication, *Cuadernos,* now a series, to appropriate audiences in Ecuador. In this publication, returned trainees wrote of their experiences implementing what they had learned, problems they had faced, and solutions they had found.

In 1993, World Learning, along with two other organizations, was awarded the Human and Educational Resources Network Support (HERNS) Project. This was an important USAID activity because it provided technical resources to USAID missions in the process of reexamining their approaches to training in order to align them more closely to mission strategic objectives and results. HERNS also move efforts beyond the historic focus on individuals toward improving the capacity and performance of institutions. World Learning's role within HERNS was multifold and included assessing training needs; drafting country training plans in conjunction with mission strategic objective teams; advising missions on cost-effective, impact-oriented alternatives to traditional U.S. academic and technical training programs including such cutting-edge options as distance learning programs; training mission staff in program implementation; providing organizational development and staff training services to mission training offices; designing training components of larger sectoral projects; drafting project papers for training procurements; and assisting with the development of training services such as pre-departure orientation, re-entry, and follow-on training.

When USAID prepared to respond to opportunities presented by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Iron Curtain through PTPE, USAID determined that countries in Central and Eastern Europe did not need programs that would bring leaders to the United States for academic training. In fact, most of the affected countries had a strong education system and many government officials and managers had advanced degrees and were as well educated as peers in Western Europe. Instead, the challenge was to introduce new ideas and innovative ways of doing things in-country in order to promote economic, political, and social change.

USAID asked PIET to respond to this need, and within the PIET consortium, the task fell to World Learning. In the first year of the project, World Learning opened offices in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Albania, Bulgaria, and Romania. Each office was staffed with an American Training Director and a local staff of various sizes. By the end of the second year, additional offices were opened in Latvia, Lithuania, and Croatia; additional participants from Estonia, Bosnia, Slovenia, and Macedonia were also being processed though no offices existed in those countries at this time. Project staff were often extremely resourceful under extraordinarily difficult conditions. On more than one occasion, for instance, groups of Bosnians selected for training left Sarajevo via tunnels under the airport to meet transportation that took them to Zagreb for processing and flights to the United States.

The PTPE approach departed from the PIET model of participant training on a number of key points. First, it was the first time that PIET established large numbers of in-country offices (at approximately the same time PIET had been asked to establish a project office in Panama). This was necessary because USAID offices in Central Europe did not have enough staff to permit them to establish training offices. In essence, PTPE project offices doubled as mission training offices. Second, PTPE staff were significantly involved in the front-end work of training, including identification, selection, and orientation of participants — again, a

departure from the standard PIET model in which those responsibilities had historically been left to USAID. Third, PTPE programs were almost exclusively short-term technical training whereas, in the past, PIET participants included both short-term and long-term trainees. Ultimately, PTPE and its successor, TRANSIT, evolved to the point at which most training took place in-country rather than in the United States. Fourth, since PTPE was conceived of and implemented concurrently with USAID's movement toward linking training to its strategic results, PTPE training was designed to meet institutional needs to improve their performance rather than the needs of individuals to be university-educated.

As stated earlier, the PIET contract ended in 1996 and was succeeded by Global Training for Development (GTD). The PTPE program also moved to the new contract and was renamed TRANSIT. USAID continues to administer two TRANSIT programs — one focusing on Central Europe, the other on much of the former Soviet Union with the exception of Russia. In the past three years, TRANSIT/Europe has moved in exciting new directions, which foreshadow directions that USAID training may take in the future.

Of greatest significance, perhaps, is that USAID has been "graduating" countries and closing missions in the region. Since its inception, the PTPE/TRANSIT project has seen country programs close in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Latvia, and Lithuania. At the same time, new offices have opened in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Serbia, in response to changing political conditions in the Balkans. As offices in northern tier countries continue to close, both USAID and World Learning seek ways to make training sustainable by building training capabilities in-country and by establishing long-distance relationships.

Local Training and Sustainability

Sustainability is facilitated by a greater reliance on in-country and third-country training along with activities that develop the capacity of local training institutions. In-country training is training in the participant's home country. For example, a typical in-country training program might involve a group of local government officials participating in a two-day workshop on ways to improve their internal management, customer service, and billing and collections procedures. In most countries that participate in the TRANSIT program, the number of in-country trainees is many times greater than the number of U.S.-based trainees.

In-country training offers several benefits: It tends to be cost-effective since it incurs less expense for travel and lodging. It is flexible since it is easier to arrange one- and two-day courses than to arrange two- to three-week courses in the United States. It also permits greater responsiveness insofar as day long courses can be developed quickly and in reaction to narrowly defined needs. In-country training can also be used to reinforce lessons learned from U.S. training, to build teamwork among managers from a single institution, or to promote cooperation among managers from different organizations.

Third-country training is similar to in-country training except that it occurs in a country that is not the United States and is not the participants' home country such as a group of Romanians training in Bulgaria. Research and evaluations of programs indicate that people are often more accepting of new ideas and approaches when introduced to them in neighboring countries rather than in the United States. Trainees often assume that a nearby country has had experiences similar to their own and are therefore more inclined to try new approaches already implemented in a neighboring country. In-country and third-country training offer another benefit — that of developing the training capacity of institutions in those countries. As USAID continues to graduate countries in East Europe, it is crucial to develop the indigenous training capability in a variety of fields. This ensures that training will continue on a sustainable basis beyond the life of any USAID-supported activities.

A new innovation for TRANSIT in Romania, Albania, and Macedonia is the creation of a small grants program for returned trainees. First implemented by World Learning in its Guatemala CAPS II program, grants permit former trainees the opportunity to apply for funding to implement some aspect of what they have learned or to increase their institutional capacity to apply new approaches and lessons learned. As seen elsewhere, these grants help overcome the most serious obstacle to obtaining results after training — the lack of financial resources needed to implement new ideas.

Results-based Training

The private sector and the U.S. government both accept as a given the importance of training to improve performance and efficiency in the work force. Measuring the effectiveness of training, however, has always challenged those in the profession. Whereas the private sector has a clearly defined measure to assess the value of training — its impact on profits — the government and, particularly USAID, have often been less successful in evaluating the impact and effectiveness of training. The reasons are understandable. USAID training attempts to develop the capacity of people to do their jobs better, to change how their organizations operate, and to make a difference in literally hundreds of fields. Many variables make it difficult to measure the results. The ability of USAID participants to effect changes in their organizations hinges on many factors that go beyond training. These include organization-specific factors such as the disposition of senior management to change or the receptivity of co-workers. They also include other factors involving broader cultural, political, or socio-economic conditions. Furthermore, simple events such as trainees leaving their organizations for personal advancement while benefiting the trainee, does not also benefit the institution.

Under TRANSIT, all participants draft Action Plans that describe what they will do upon their return to implement the lessons learned. Such Action Plans serve several functions: First, they force trainees to think about what they will do with what they have learned early on in their training. Second, they serve as indicators that may eventually be used to measure results. Third, they identify areas for follow-on in-country training. Finally, they act as a

feedback mechanism for the original training design to ensure that any proposed U.S. training will help achieve the results described in the Action Plan.

The combined focus on in-country training, results, and Action Plans has resulted in more accurately tracking what participants do with their training upon return home. In turn, this has permitted World Learning to work closely with USAID to prepare and disseminate success stories that capture the results of USAID-funded training. Success stories are collected by local staff who are in contact with past trainees. The stories are gathered and sent to USAID and other interested parties as evidence of the effectiveness of training.

Increased Use of Technology

Increased use of technology is another way to create post-project, long-term linkages between institutions in the United States and other countries. World Learning uses basic distance learning technology to facilitate both learning and long-term connections. In Romania, for instance, several social work and child welfare organizations that have received training have put some of their training materials online and have begun sharing information via CD-ROMs, email, and listservs. Returned participants frequently find that World Learning has built into their learning experience electronic bulletin boards that allow trainees to link with each other as well as to a U.S.-based subject matter expert. The expert responds to questions from former trainees and information is shared among all former participants, furthering their learning and establishing active dialog among them. In the near future, World Learning will hold its first videoconference between Macedonian textile manufacturers and their American counterparts. As other technological innovations become available as well as cost-effective and reliable, they will also be incorporated to further training needs.

Technology is increasingly serving training administration as well. USAID has devoted significant resources to developing two databases to manage their training activities. One, TraiNet, is a database of demographic information on training participants by which USAID can track the number of people trained, their countries of origin, and training areas. USAID and training contractors use a second system, Training Events On Line (TEOL), to plan new training programs.

Looking Ahead

Several developments have combined to affect training and training results. First, recent research has contributed important insights about how adults learn. This is important to the design and implementation of training. Second, much has been learned about how individuals and organizations change and grow, as well as about impediments to change and growth and ways to overcome them. Third, a focus on training outcomes is now integral to all USAID-funded participant training. In fact, under the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1994, USAID must provide evidence that its programs produce

demonstrable results, measured in the short term. This is a significant change from the past when it was enough to infer successful outcomes by merely citing outputs such as the number of trainees participating in programs. USAID must now show that its investment in training dollars affects the performance of an institution, thereby advancing a broad development goal.

As technology becomes more widespread in developing nations, it will also have an impact on training. The use of distributed learning technologies, whether email, Web-based, or simply video-camera conferencing, will permit information to be disseminated to more people and at a lower cost per person than ever before. In particular, opportunities for maintaining long-term professional relationships beyond the duration of government-funded programs will become an important dimension of training.

Assuming that U.S. foreign aid funds will not increase dramatically in the next few years, one might predict an increasing reliance on building the capacity of local training institutions. Whether university-based, NGOs, or for-profit training businesses, investments in improving the skills of these institutions will, in the long run, leave a legacy of local training capacity that will endure far beyond the graduation date of the country from USAID assistance.

An emphasis on building local capacity and distance learning does, however, have some drawbacks. One significant drawback worth considering is the lost opportunity of visitors to see firsthand how things work in the United States or elsewhere. Direct experience and personal contact are often key factors in affecting the trainees' capacities to process new information, believe in it, and adapt it their own context. De-emphasizing the direct exchange aspect of training may ultimately lessen the overall effectiveness of training programs.

USAID-supported training will undoubtedly continue into the foreseeable future. Over the past several decades it has provided flexible and effective approaches that aid the capacity of individuals and institutions to effect change, to improve performance, and to make a difference in their lives. Training has evolved and will most probably continue to do so. But no matter how training is conducted, it will probably always continue to be about building human capacities — helping people to take control and to make a difference in their lives and in the lives of those around them.

ENDNOTES

1 For details on successes of training, see *Building New Leadership in Central Europe,* World Learning, 1995, and *USAID-Lithuania Training Program Review,* USAID/Lithuania, 2000.

2 According to the *Inter Agency Working Group on U.S. Government Sponsored International Exchanges and Training 1998 Annual Report,* in 1998, 41 U.S. government agencies engaged in some type of international training and exchange program.

3 Information on the genesis and early years of PIET was obtained through a telephone interview with Ronald Springwater, former executive director of PIET, October 2000.

4 Budget figures compiled by the International Education and Training Coalition, August 1998.

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